

diameter smaller than that of the micropores of the outermost layer and the innermost layer, is disposed as intermediate layer(s), between the outermost layer and the innermost layer, wherein the composite hollow fiber membrane has overall porosity of not less than 75% by volume, and wherein

the isothermal crystallization time τ_s of the resin used for the outermost layer and the innermost layer and the isothermal crystallization time τ_p of the resin used for the dense layer satisfy the following relationship:

$$1 < \tau/\tau_s < 100.$$

REMARKS

The Examiner is thanked for the courteous interview conducted on April 16, 2003 in which the issues in the case were clarified.

According to the Examiner's suggestion, Claim 1, line 5 has been amended to insert "said dense layer(s) being" before the term "thinner" and to insert "said dense layer(s)" after the term "and". No new matter has been added into the amended claim. It is requested that this amendment be entered, since it was made at the request of the Examiner.

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION

Claims 1, 3-8 and 11-17 are active in the case.

The rejection of Claims 1, 3-8 and 11-17 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over EP 0 740 952 alone or in view of JP 3-169330 (Abstract) is traversed.

The Examiner refers to Table 1, page 13 of EP 0 740 952 as showing a porosity overlapping with the porosity of present Claim 1, which reads "wherein the composite hollow fiber membrane has overall porosity of not less than 75% by volume". However, it can be